

C.W. Post Office Building
63-65 West Michigan Avenue
Battle Creek
Calhoun County
Michigan

HABS No. MI-313

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13- BATCH,
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PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

REDUCED COPIES OF MEASURED DRAWINGS

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
MID-ATLANTIC REGION, NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
PHILADELPHIA, PENNSYLVANIA 19106

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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

C. W. POST OFFICE BUILDING

HABS No. MI-313

Location: 63-65 West Michigan Avenue, Battle Creek, Michigan 49017
USGS Battle Creek Quadrangle, Universal Transverse Mercator
Coordinates Zone 16: 4,686,620 meters north and 649,482
meters east.

Present Owner: City of Battle Creek, Michigan

Present Occupant: None

Present Use: The building is currently scheduled for demolition
in early spring of 1985. Construction of a
heavily landscaped parking lot and pedestrian park
is scheduled on this site for summer of 1985.

Significance: The C. W. Post Office Building was constructed
for C. W. Post as part of his complex known as
the "Post Block." The original
building was constructed in conjunction with the
Post Tavern, both designed by R. T. Newberry of
Chicago. Post's objective in constructing the
building was to provide the first structure
solely dedicated to office and commercial use in Battle
Creek. The fifth and sixth floors of the six-story
building consisted of a ballroom and offices
which were occupied by the Athelstan Club. The
first floor and basement were occupied by the L.
W. Robinson Dry Goods Company, purported to be
the most elaborate and advanced store in the
State of Michigan. (1) The intermediate floors
were occupied by physicians, dentists, lawyers,
insurance offices, beauty parlors, and many other
similar businesses.

The Post Building, located at the intersection of
West Michigan Avenue (formerly Main Street) and
McCamly Street is the last remaining building of
the C. W. Post complex. The Post Tavern, the
Garage, the Marjorie Block, and the Post Theater
have been demolished. The Post Building was one

of many downtown buildings heated by the central heating system of the Consumer's Power Company. In 1969, Consumer's steam plant was demolished, leaving these buildings without heat. All the tenants moved out except Jacobson's (a women's apparel store located in a portion of the basement, first and second floors), which converted to their own heating plant. (1)

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History

1. Date of Erection: Construction of the Post Building began with the purchase of the property on March 7, 1900, and was completed in late 1900 (Register of Deeds March 17, 1900, Liber 162 page 187, Calhoun County). The L. W. Robinson store opened for business in the basement and first floor levels on October 3, 1900. (2) and (3) The Athelstan Club (a social and literary organization) also moved into the building in October of 1900 to occupy the fifth and sixth floors. (4)
2. Architect: R. T. Newberry - 1900 construction. R. T. Newberry of Chicago, Illinois, was the son-in-law of the Honorable E. Nichols of Battle Creek. He designed the Phelps Sanitarium, the original Post Hotel, and the Post Building. (5) In 1913, J. C. Llewellyn of Chicago, Illinois, was the architect select-

- 1 "Historical Corners of Battle Creek, Michigan", from Enquirer and Evening News, January 2, 1928, 1976 Update by Roderic Crane, page 10.
- 2 Daily Journal, page 3, column 4, Thursday, October 4, 1900
- 3 Battle Creek Moon, October 2, 1900
- 4 "Athelstan Club, A History," No. 881, 1956, located in Willard Public Library
- 5 Battle Creek Moon, March 2, 1900, page 7, column 1

ed to design the additions to the Post Hotel and the Post Building. (1) Further information is being solicited from Gordon W. Warren and Associates, Inc., the current owner of J. C. Llewellyn's records.

3. Original and subsequent owners: References to the chain of title to the land upon which the structure stands are in the Office of the Recorder of Deeds, Calhoun County, Michigan.

1900 - Warranty Deed, March 7, 1900, recorded March 17, 1900, Liber 162, page 187. Postum Cereal Company.

1910 - Warranty Deed, October 6, 1910, recorded October 8, 1910, Liber 224, page 308. Charles W. Post.

1919 - Order Assigning Residue, dated March 24, 1919, recorded August 20, 1919, Liber 274, page 426. Leila Y. Post Montgomery.

1943 - Order Assigning Residue, dated April 19, 1943, recorded April 19, Liber 507, page 495. Carl H. Montgomery.

1960 - Order Assigning Residue, recorded February 1, 1960, Liber 790, page 279. William Edwin Montgomery, Cadene Montgomery, Edith Patton, Kenneth F. Montgomery, and Lawrence J. Montgomery.

1960 - Deed dated February 1, 1960, recorded February 1, 1960, Liber 790, page 284. Montgomery Properties (a co-partnership composed of Kenneth F. Montgomery, Lawrence J. Montgomery, Cadene Montgomery, Edith Patton, and Julia Montgomery Barnes).

1963 - Order Assigning Residue recorded June 7, 1963, Liber 840 of Deeds, page 797, Office of etc., Julia Barnes (one-fifth interest).

1984 - Warranty Deed dated September 12, 1984, recorded September 27, 1984, Liber 1319, page 220, 221 and 222. City of Battle Creek, Michigan.

4. Builder/Contractor: Henry V. Snyder

Constructed - Post Tavern 1899, Post Building, Grandin Advertising Agency.

Three contracts with Postum Cereal Company, Battle Creek Paper Plant, Elks Temple, Union Steam Pump, Advance Thresher, Rumely Company, Thomas Block, St. Philip Church, and others.

Residence - 202 North Washington Avenue

Died - May 26, 1915

Reference - (1)
(2)
(3)

Suppliers - Unknown

5. Original Plans and Construction: The original plans appear to have been lost. Extensive research including communication with the previous building owner, City of Battle Creek Inspection plan files, and the office of Gordon W. Warren and Associates, Inc., of 547 West Jackson Boulevard, Chicago, Illinois 60606, the current owner of the records of J. Llewellyn, Architect, indicate that no plans are available. Specifications for the addition constructed in 1913 are available from Gordon W. Warren Associates, Inc., in Chicago.

- 1 Battle Creek Enquirer and News, Thursday, May 27, 1915, page 2
- 2 Evening News, May 26, 1915, page 3, column 3
- 3 Battle Creek Daily Moon, May 26, 1915, page 3, column 3

6. Alterations and Additions: In 1913 an addition to the Post Building was constructed. A bridge was also added to connect the building with the Post Tavern hotel across McCamly Street. The second and third floors of the addition were designed to accommodate hotel guests and were constructed as an annex to the Post Tavern hotel. The remainder of the addition, floors four through seven, were devoted to office space.

Alteration of the original building also took place as part of this project. This involved the dividing of the two-story sixth floor ballroom area to add a seventh floor and the installation of three elevators in the center of the structure. These projects were scheduled for completion on December 1, 1913. (1)

B. Historical Context

In 1891, C. W. Post came to Battle Creek to enter as a patient the Battle Creek Sanitarium established by Dr. John Harvey Kellogg. Post, at the time, was an emaciated, discouraged, chronic invalid seeking the healing properties that the Sanitarium was growing famous for. The emphasis at the Sanitarium was placed on good nutrition through the use of toasted grains, herbal beverages, and physical and mental rehabilitation techniques. It was from this environment that Post was revived either by its treatment or its incentives along with his interest in Dr. Kellogg's food processing experiments. Post then started his own experiments in 1894, and by 1895 the Postum Cereal Company was originated. Post then proceeded to promote his products (Postum Drink and Grape Nuts Cereal) through extensive advertising. Post became so successful, that by 1902 his worth had grown to that of a millionaire. Based on this success, promoters descended on Battle Creek to get in on the bonanza. Within a two-year period over 80 cereal company names were registered, thus beginning the cereal boom. The best of these new cereal companies

were the Postum Cereal Company, the Maple Flake Company (later becoming the Ralston Purina Company) and the Corn Flake Company (later known as the Kellogg Company). (1)

Post continued to promote his products on an ever-expanding scale traveling nationwide and to foreign countries such as England, even advertising on London buses. This type of extensive travel, accompanied by his fast growing wealth, provided the impetus for Post's development of the downtown. His first building, the Post Tavern, was built with the best available materials and decorated with the finest art works. It became well known by travelers of the New York Central Railroad from New York to Chicago. As the cereal demand exploded, Post's former residence was taken over to accommodate manufacturing expansion and his residence was moved to an apartment in the Post Tavern in 1901. His further interest in the business and cultural growth of the City was manifested in the construction of the Post Office Building and the Post Theatre between 1900 and 1901 as part of his attempt to bring a city atmosphere to the town. These buildings known as the "Marjorie Block" (named after his daughter, Marjorie Post), also called the "Post Block", were constructed to accommodate the large influx of general service businesses catering the growing cereal industry and the large worker population required to service these and related industries.

In 1902, Post became very active in promoting his Post-Check Currency Bill. This proposed currency was a concept which allowed paper money in small denominations to be purchased at the Post Office and exchanged like any other money, and, when assigned, could be sent safely through the United States Postal Service. This project demanded much time and many appearances before Congressional Committees. He also avidly attended other committee meetings and was a forthright foe of any congressman who placed self-interest above the needs of the average citizen. As a result of this involvement, Post enrolled his daughter Marjorie in a private school (now Mount Vernon Seminary and Junior College) to keep her near his national

interests, moved his residence and opened an office in Washington during this period of time. About 1906, Post decided to relieve himself of many of the Postum Company activities to give him more freedom to travel and pursue political and other outside interests. To accomplish this he set up a cabinet of plant management. This cabinet took control of advertising, promotion, sales and distribution, finance and accounting, purchasing and general supervision of the cereal business. He also delegated the responsibility for the supervision of his Texas ventures, personal stocks, bonds, and real estate. This cabinet was set up with excellent salaries and benefits for its members, all of which were unique social reforms for the era. Post continued, however, to provide each member of this cabinet with very specific instructions in conducting business. (1)

C. W. Post continued his political and labor interests until late 1913 when he showed signs of strain and depression and subsequently traveled to his summer home in Santa Barbara, California. In March, 1914, he was rushed to the Mayo Clinic for a successful appendicitis operation, whereupon he returned to Santa Barbara for recuperation.

On May 9, 1914, C. W. Post committed suicide after continued bouts with pain and depression. (2)

¹ C. W. Post, The Hour and The Man, pages 87-89

² C. W. Post, The Hour and The Man, page 146, and the Battle Creek Enquirer, May 10, 1914, page 1, column 1, and page 2, COLUMN 4

Part II ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character - The C.W. Post Building is an early twentieth century commercial building with Classical detail. It is a seven-story wood frame building supported by concrete columns and a stone and mortar foundation.
2. Condition of fabric - The building is presently in poor condition. The wood frame is in an advanced stage of deterioration. Structural flaws exist at the southeast corner of the building due to severe settling along the common wall of the adjacent building presently occupied by Herp's Department Store.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Over-all dimensions: The building is "L" shaped measuring 66 feet on the West Michigan Avenue (north) elevation, 184' on the McCamly Street (west) elevation and 132' on the south elevation. The southern portion of the east elevation common with Herp's Department Store measures 52'3". The north wall of the "L" then returns 66' to the main structure and north again 131'9" to the Michigan Avenue elevation. The HABS drawings submitted as part of this outline show the detailed measurements.
2. Foundations - The foundations are field stone and mortar, with reinforced concrete pier footings for center support posts.
3. Walls - The exterior walls are faced with red hard burned straight brick on Michigan Avenue and gold common brick on the remaining sides. A running bond was used for all brick. The street level sides of the building on Michigan Avenue and McCamly Street are covered with green marble tile. Window sills are cut buff bedford stone.
4. Structural system, framing - The original building has a wood platform framing with floor joists set in notches laid into the exterior wall brick work. The 1913 addition is con-

structed of reinforced concrete and tile partitions.

5. Porches, stoops, balconies, bulkheads - None.
6. Chimneys - The building has no chimneys with the exception of a fabricated metal chimney added to the exterior of the rear wall of the building to accommodate the furnace installed in the Jacobson's Store in 1969.
7. Openings:
 - a. Doorways and doors - Exterior doors consist of metal frame doors with plate glass inserts and wood frame doors covered with sheet metal.
 - b. Windows and shutters - The windows are plate glass set in metal frames on the first floor. The remainder of the building has metal clad wood double hung windows with two to six lights. These are set in metal jamb inserts mounted in wood jambs set in masonry. The sixth floor Michigan Avenue and McCamly Street elevations have a portion of the windows constructed with arched double hung windows with a circular light centered above the divided double hung sections constructed of wood set in wood jambs.
8. Roof:
 - a. Shape and covering - The roof is a flat roof with a raised masonry curb. The covering is a hot process built up system with no granular covering. The 1900 part of the roof is a wood deck system. The 1913 portion is a reinforced concrete deck system.
 - b. Cornice and eaves - The cornice detail is constructed of a wood frame mounted on top of the exterior masonry wall covered with formed 16 ounce rolled copper detailing and posts. The portion of the walls not facing Michigan Avenue and McCamly Street are capped with clay tile set in mortar.

- c. Dormers, cupolas, and towers - A penthouse on top of the main building which houses the three elevator units is constructed in a scaled reduction of the main building with a reduced scale cornice detailing made to match the main building.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor Plans:

- a. Describe by floors - The basement is divided between the 1900 structure and the 1913 addition. The old portion consists of storage space and water, sewer and steam pipe access area. The newer portion is part of the building formerly occupied by the Jacobson's Store with open floor space, display cases and storage area.

The first floor was dedicated to show window space, fitting rooms, and open display area for the Jacobson's Store (formerly L. W. Robinson Store).

The second floor area is divided between the 1900 building and the 1913 addition. The early portion is divided office space and the newer portion was part of the Jacobson's Store area with sales display area, storage and fitting rooms.

The third floor is a combination of hotel/apartment rooms in the addition and office space in the original building.

Floors four through seven are all dedicated to office space.

- 2. Stairways - The building has two stair sets, one in the north section of the building and one at the south end of the building. Both stair sets are constructed of cast iron stringers, risers and treads, with nosing to receive concrete treads surfaced in Terrazzo. The southern set has iron doors with wire reinforced glass at each floor acting as fire breaks.
- 3. Flooring - The original portion of the building has wood tongue and groove flooring over a wood

sub-floor. This in turn has been covered with carpeting, floor tile or linoleum. The addition constructed in 1913 has steel reinforced concrete floors with Terrazzo borders and base. Area rugs, floor tile or linoleum was used to cover the remainder of the floor area.

4. Wall and ceiling finish - Walls and ceilings are covered with smooth finish, painted, plaster. Some offices in later years had acoustical tile ceiling installed. Interior walls installed in the addition were constructed of hard burned partition tile laid in mortar. The interior walls of the original building were constructed of wood framing covered with lath and plaster.
5. Openings:
 - a. Doorways and doors - Doorways are constructed from quartersawn oak jambs, stops and casing. All doors are quartersawn oak panel doors with the upper half constructed with patterned glass inserts.
 - b. Windows - Windows are double hung wood windows clad in metal, set in metal jamb liners. The window jamb extension, stool and casing are of quartersawn oak.
6. Decorative features and trim - Outside corners on all interior walls have a turned oak protective cap covering the lower half of the corner. Some ceilings on the upper floors have oak trim installed at the ceiling and wall intersection forming false decorative beams. All base trim in the original building is quartersawn oak, the addition has terrazzo base.
7. Hardware - Interior doors all have heavy brass hardware including decorative massive latch sets.
8. Mechanical equipment:
 - a. Heating, air conditioning and ventilation. The original heating system was high pressure steam radiation provided by a central steam plant owned by Consumers Power Company. When the steam plant was closed in 1969, the Jacobson's Store

converted to their own hot water heating system. The remainder of the building was closed at that time. The Jacobson's Store also installed central air conditioning for their store.

- b. Lighting - Hallways and some offices and store space are lighted with florescent lights hung from the ceilings. Other portions of the building are lighted by incandescent lighting either wall or ceiling mounted using single bulb glass globed fixtures.
- c. Plumbing - The drainage system for the building is constructed of wrought iron pipe. The water supply system is galvanized iron pipe, hot water supplies are covered with 3/4" asbestos coating and cold water supplies with 3/4" hair felt. Lavatories were pedestal units from Clow's catalogue Plate No. 260 with Byron self-closing nickel-plated faucets. Water closets and urinals were heavy earthenware siphon jet type. Seat covers were oak finished to match building trim.
- d. Site:
 - 1. General setting and orientation - The building is set at the southeast corner of West Michigan Avenue and McCamly Street with the east side adjoining the Herp's Store and the south side adjoining a parking lot on Jackson Street. The north and west street elevations are bordered by a concrete sidewalk to street curb. The building is located in the Battle Creek Central Business District.
 - 2. Historic Landscape Design - None.
 - 3. Out-buildings - None.

PART III SOURCES OF INFORMATION

- A. Original Architectural Drawings - Not available.

- B. Early Views - 1901 photograph - C. W. Post, The Hour and the Man, page 83 and 1913 photograph - C. W. Post Office Building addition under construction.
- C. Interviews - Robert McCarty, 508 Garrison, Battle Creek, local historian, employed by Post Cereal Company (1934-1973).
- D. Bibliography:
1. Primary and unpublished Sources - None.
 2. Secondary and Published Sources:

Battle Creek Moon - October 2, 1900
"Historical Corners of Battle Creek, Michigan",
from Enquirer and Evening News, January 2, 1928,
1976 Update by Roderic Crane, page 10
Daily Journal, page 3, column 4, Thursday,
October 4, 1900
"Athelstan Club, A History," No. 881, 1956,
located in Willard Public Library
Battle Creek Moon, March 2, 1900, page 7,
column 1
Battle Creek Enquirer, January 5, 1911, page 1,
column 3
Battle Creek Enquirer and News, Thursday,
May 27, 1915, page 2
Evening News, May 26, 1915, page 3, column 3
Battle Creek Daily Moon, May 26, 1915, page 3,
column 3
Evening News, August 7, 1913
Tales of Battle Creek, page 85 and 86
C. W. Post, The Hour and The Man, page 82
C. W. Post, The Hour and The Man, page 85
Battle Creek Enquirer and News, May 10, 1914,
page 1, column 1 and page 2, column 4
C. W. Post Office Building specifications
available from Gordon W. Warren Associates,
Inc., Chicago, Illinois
- E. Likely Sources not yet investigated - unknown.
- F. Supplemental Material - None.

Prepared by: Kim Tuck
UDAG Relocation Officer
City of Battle Creek
April 12, 1985

PART IV PROJECT INFORMATION

- A. Demolition - This property is scheduled to be demolished for the erection of a high-quality heavily landscaped surface parking area and park. It is a key part of the City's overall Master Plan for the development of the Central Business District funded through an Urban Development Action Grant in conjunction with the construction of the Kellogg World Headquarters building.